United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1668
17 June 1994

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ UNAMIR soldier killed, another seriously wounded in Rwanda; RPF forces raid Church compound in Kigali, evacuate 600 Tutsi refugees; cease-fire talks resume in capital; civilian exchanges to restart tomorrow.

+ UNHCR monitors processing of Haitians refugees aboard United States hospital ship in Jamaica; recognized refugees to go to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for resettlment in third countries; others to be returned to Haiti.

+ Secretary-General welcomes agreement signed in Oslo today between Guatamalan Government and URNG on resettlement of uprooted people, human rights, education and land tenure.

+ United Nations inter-agency humanitarian mission in Yemen reports 20,000 people displaced in Taez and Lahaj by recent conflict urgently need food and medical care.

+ International Conference on Money Laundering begins tomorrow in Italy; participants to aim for global cooperation to control circulation and investment of funds by criminal organizations.

* * *

A United Nations military observer from Uruguay was killed and another officer from Bangladesh was critically wounded today, when their two-vehicle convoy was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade about 25 miles north of Kigali. A Canadian plane evacuated the injured soldier and the dead man's body, a spokesman for the Organization said. The two soldiers were part of a team of military observers attempting to reach Gisenyi, where members of the Rwandan interim government had reportedly taken refuge following the fall of Giterama to the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) forces this week.

Last night, RPF forces launched a raid on the Sainte Famille Church compound, where 60 young boys were abducted by militia earlier this week.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

After some shelling, 600 predominantly Tutsi refugees were escorted from the Government controlled compound into RPF territory. Casualties were reportedly high, the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, cease-fire talks resummed this morning in Kigali without noticeable progress, the spokesman said. The exchange of civilian refugees is scheduled to begin again tomorrow, and flights into the country are planned to resume on Monday. Ten armoured personnel carriers will be brought into Kigali from Somali beginning this weekend and, as soon as possible, additional troops will arrive in Rwanda as part of the expanded UNAMIR mandate.

* * *

The process of determining the status of Haitians found at sea has begun on board United States boats in Jamaica, according to a spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Yesterday, the United States Coast Guard took 35 Haitians on board an enormous hospital ship, the USS Comfort, which is docked in Kingston. The Haitians were found in three separate boats and included 31 men, three women, two of whom were pregnant, and one child. The group had spent about 8 days at sea.

A UNHCR representative was present during the process and the agency has interpreters and 12 lawyers on board the Comfort who have full access to the Haitian refugees. The UNHCR spokeswoman said although the proceedings went well, large numbers of refugees would be better processed on land, and negotiations on that subject were currently under way with the Turks and Caicos Islands. Haitians recognized as refugees would be taken to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and then resettled in third countries. Those whose applications were not granted would be sent back to Haiti, the spokeswoman added.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has welcomed the agreement signed in Oslo today by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaría Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) on the resettlement of people uprooted by the 30-year conflict in their country. It will come into force with the final signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Government and the URNG scheduled for the end of the year, and concludes a month of intense United Nations supervised negotiations in Mexico and Norway.

The Agreement outlines a comprehensive strategy for the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, as well as guarantees relating to human rights, safety, education, legal land tenure and reintegration. The parties will soon begin discussions on the next item on the negotiating agenda -- the identity and rights of indigenous people.

Representatives from donor countries, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank met this week in Paris to facilitate financial support for the Guatemala peace process. Norway will make $1 million available towards the financing of the Guatemalan resettlement.

* * *

A United Nations inter-agency humanitarian mission in Yemen has reported 20,000 people have been displaced in the provinces of Taez and Lahaj as a result of the recent conflict there. Most of the displaced persons have found accommodation with relatives and friends or in facilities provided by local social services and voluntary organizations. However, they are in urgent need of food and medical care, a spokesman for the Organization said today.

The mission reports Lahaj's health system has deteriorated considerably following the confiscation and destruction of medical equipment, and the flight of health professionals. Officials fear malnutrition and disease outbreaks due to the lack of clean drinking water, but report little damage to the water supply and sanitation infrastructure which is inoperable because of electricity failures. The Mission was made up of representatives from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

* * *

The International Conference on Preventing and Controlling Money Laundering and the Use and Proceeds of Crime, will begin tomorrow in Courmayeur, Italy. The three-day conference will be attended by representatives from governments, international financial institutions, criminology institutes and United Nations agencies. It is taking place amidst a growing awareness that effective measures to combat money laundering were essential in the world-wide struggle against organized crime.

Participants are expected to review the mounting problems created by the accumulation, circulation and investment of criminal funds. They will also evaluate regulations, procedures and criminal penalties with a view to enlisting countries in a global effort to combat money laundering as a crime in itself. Cooperation between Parliaments, criminal justice and financial regulatory agencies will be needed to curb the international transfer of funds by criminal organizations.

The Conference is taking place under the auspices of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch. It will consider such questions as global trends in money laundering, including opportunities in developing countries and countries in transition, international control mechanisms, and technical cooperation.

* *** *